

259
15. R. 9.

Samuel: A Barnes
1732
SERMON

Occasioned by the

DEATH

Of the late

Mr. MATTHEW MADDEN.

Preached at

DEVONSHIRE SQUARE,
January the 16th, 1732. 15

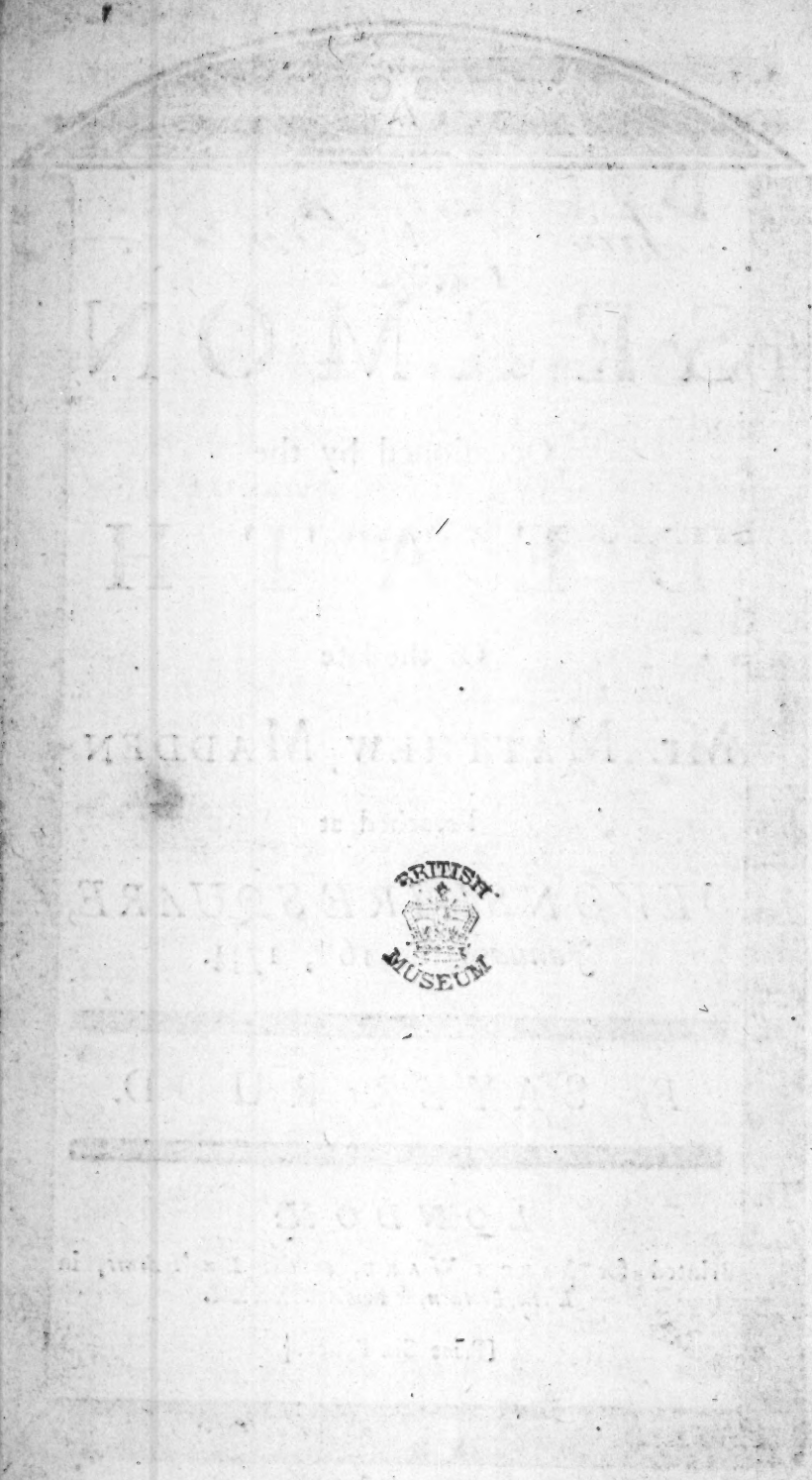
By SAYER RUDD.

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THE NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

WASHINGTON, D.C.

DEDICATION.

T O

The GENTLEMEN who manage
and promote the *Evening Lecture* on
LORD'S Days, at the Meeting-House
near *Devonshire Square*.

SIRS,

IT being at your request that I at first preached
on this subject, and likewise through your
importunity that I now consent to this publi-
cation, I could think of no persons to whom the
inscription so properly belonged as your selves.

There is certainly a loud voice in the several
deaths which have lately happened among the
members of this Society. It is very affecting to
consider, that no less than four, who assisted with
you in encouraging this Lecture, should be cut
off in so short a compass of time as a fortnight.

I am very glad that the providence has not
been without its proper weight upon your minds :
That you have been so far from overlooking these
sudden removes, that you have esteemed them so
many repetitions of our LORD'S charge, There-
fore be ye also ready.

I can assure you, it has been no small satis-
faction to me, that I have had the opportunity

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of observing the death of others, so remarkably blessed to the quickening of you. It must not only raise your character with those, who wish well to the REDEEMER's kingdom, but be looked upon as a happy presage, that GOD designs to follow your attempts with his blessing.

The late Mr. MADDEN's death was certainly the great alarm: And I do not wonder it should, when I consider how well he deserved of this Society, upon many accounts.

His unweariedness in consulting the best measures to promote the interest of CHRIST in your hands, and his zeal and faithfulness in seeing them well executed, were undoubtedly great blessings to the Lecture: And under such a loss I cannot advise you better, than to tread in his steps, and imitate his virtues.

That the great GOD, the sovereign Disposer of all things, would graciously repair your breaches, by a succession of other valuable members, and make the service you are engaged in successful for the conversion of sinners, and the comfort not only of your own souls, but of those also who may attend with you, is, and will always be, the sincere wish, and hearty prayer of,

GENTLEMEN,

Your affectionate Friend,

and much obliged Servant,



SAYER RUDD.

MATTHEW xxiv. 44.

Therefore be ye also ready.

IT is not very material, whether we are able to point out the particular time and occasion upon which these words were delivered by our LORD, or not. Here, indeed, they stand in connexion with his discourse concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the end of the world ; but, in the gospel by *St. Luke*^a, they are recited among some other of our LORD's sermons, without any particular reference to that providence, as tho' they had been spoken at some other time, and upon some other occasion. However this be, it is certain, that in both places they are introduced as the application of one and the same *parable* ; for the words preceding the text in *St. Luke*, as well as here, are these : *But know this*, or as some choose to render it, *But this you do know*^b, *that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have*

^a Chap. xii. 40.

^b Εξείρο ὃ γινώσκετε.

suffered

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suffered his house to be broken up. Which is, as tho' our LORD had said to his disciples: *If a house-keeper would be thus vigilant and careful to preserve himself and his effects from the injurious attempts of a thief, how ought you to conduct your selves in respect of my coming?* You have infinitely more at stake, and therefore the consequence is much more awful: How then ought you to act? May I not very justly recommend the example of the good man to your imitation, and improve his practice into an exhortation for your use? *Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh.*

As to the *Son of man*, I presume, we are at no loss who to understand by these words. Our LORD has so frequently spoken of himself under this character, that we must be very little conversant with our Bible, to be in any danger of misapplying it^b. The greater difficulty

^b It is observed, that this character is always in our LORD's own words. See *Matth. viii. 20, &c. Mark ii. 10, &c. Luke vi. 5, &c. John i. 51, &c.* CHRIST uses it not only to suggest to us the truth of his humanity, or, that he is really man; nor only to intimate his humility, and set his followers an example, that having taken their nature, he does not disdain to own them by the name peculiar to their nature; nor again, barely to signify, that he is emphatically the *Son of man*, h. e. the most excellent Son of man, he that is Heir of all things, or that has a natural right to all that belonged to man; nor, let me add once more, barely in reference to that famous prophecy of him in *Daniel*, Chap. vii. 13. tho' that has respect to him as the true MESSIAH; but also, and principally, to intimate that he is the *second Adam*, and so ought to be considered as the *second Man*. For the apostle speaks of CHRIST and Adam as if there were only *these two men* in the world: *The first man*, says he, is of

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difficulty here is to settle our notions about his *coming*, to satisfy our selves what is intended by that: Yet some care is to be taken in this particular, because the exhortation in the text is partly founded upon it.

It is an observation which cannot possibly escape the diligent reader, that *the coming of the Son of man* is mentioned more than once in this chapter; but whether it is always to be taken in the same sense, is the question. Dr. *Lightfoot*, unless I mistake him, seems to refer the whole of the chapter, and by consequence this *coming* of our LORD, to the destruction of *Jerusalem*^c. But if what Dr. *Whitby* observes from him (for I have not been able, upon the narrowest search, to find out the place) *viz.* That our LORD's discourse upon that subject, ended at the 42^d or 44th verse, exclusive^d; and that the words of our text, and the remaining part of the chapter, were delivered at another time, as seems probable from St. *LUKE*^e: If this observation be just, there can be no reason to confine *the coming* of the Son of man in the text, to his

the earth, earthly; the second Man is the LORD from heaven, 1 Cor. xv. 47. wherein he considers them in their public capacities, as the two covenant-heads or representatives of all mankind; *Adam* of all his natural seed, and *CHRIST* of all his spiritual. And therefore our LORD, by calling himself *the Son of man*, refers us back to the first promise, and thereby demonstrates his *Messiahship*.

^c Harmony of the New Testament, vol. I. p. 257.

^d Dr. *Whitby* in loc. and additional Annotations, p. 28.

^e Chap. xii. 31, &c.

bring-

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bringing those desolating judgments upon the *Jews*^f. It must be confessed, indeed, that CHRIST'S coming, and his coming as a thief, may intend his executing judgments upon a nation or church. As when he says to the church of *Sardis*: *If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee*^g. And some probably conjecture, that they are used by the apostle with a particular reference to this judgment inflicted upon the *Jews*, when he says to the *Thessalonians*: *For your selves know perfectly that the day of the LORD so cometh as a thief in the night*^h.

But as I am of opinion, that our LORD had equal respect to those questions which his disciples put to him in the beginning of this chapter: *Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world*ⁱ: And as those questions are supposed not only to regard his coming to overturn the *Jewish* polity, but also his coming the second time to judge the world; I think, we may very well be allow'd to include that as one part of the meaning of this word.

^f This I observe in consulting Dr. *Lightfoot*, that the order in which he places the xiith of *Luke*, where the words of our text occur, seems to intimate as if he believed that they were not only spoken upon some other occasion, but before these in *Matthew*, (supposing the whole chapter to have been delivered at the same time) and so proves, that there is no necessity to fix the coming of the Son of man to the overthrow of *Jerusalem*.

^g Rev. iii. 3. See xvi. 15. ^h 1 Thess. v. 2. ⁱ *Match.* xiv. 3.

Not but, besides this *national* and *general* coming, the one respecting the body of the *Jews*, and the other the desolation of the world, we have reason to think that there is likewise a third, a *private* or *personal* coming here intended. I am very much mistaken, if we have not some hints to this purpose in the context, particularly in these words: *Blessed is that servant, whom his LORD, when he cometh [personally to him] shall find so doing^k.* The same may be gathered from the parallel text in *St. Luke*: *Blessed are those servants, whom the LORD when he cometh shall find watching^l.* And in other places of scripture this use of the word is common^m. Now as this has respect to particular persons, so it designs a particular and an especial coming of CHRIST; which can be no other than his coming to them by death.

And therefore upon the whole, it seems as if this term was used here in one or other of these senses, *h. e.* either, 1. For our LORD's coming in a way of judgment against a church or nation; as particularly against the *Jews*. Or, 2. For his coming at the last day to judge the world. Or, 3. For his coming to remove us from hence by deathⁿ. I shall regard the

^k Ver. 46. See also 50. xiv. 3. Heb. x. 37, &c.

^l Chap. xii. 37.

^m John

ⁿ There are several other senses in which this word is applied to Christ, as, 1. It is used of his incarnation, 1 Tim. i. 15. 2. Of his appearing in his public ministry to the *Jews*, John i. 10. 3. For his transfiguration, Matt. xvi. ult. 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, &c. 4. For his gracious presence with his people in duty, Rev. iii. 20, &c.

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expression only in this last sense. And, I apprehend, there is the less need to extend our views of it farther, since death as effectually determines the state of individuals °, as the last judgment will that of the whole world ; since the time of CHRIST's coming in the former way, is as uncertain as the time of his coming in the latter : And since, finally, if we are not *ready* for death, 'tis impossible we should ever be *ready* for the judgment.

What we design from the words upon this view of them, will be in the following method :

Firstly, We shall endeavour to give the genuine meaning of the word *ready* ; or, show what we are to understand by that term, as here used.

Secondly, Assign several arguments to prove the reasonableness and necessity of being *ready* for death. And,

Lastly, Conclude with such reflexions as may be proper to the subject, and the melancholy occasion before us.

Firstly then, We are to exhibit the genuine meaning of the word *ready* : Or, show in what sense that term is here to be understood.

Now, I presume, we are all so well acquainted with the general acceptation or use of this word, as to know, that to be *ready*, or *prepared* (for the design of both words is the

° Eccles. xii. 7.

same)

same) intends either *our having the things necessary upon any special occasion at hand*; or, *being in a proper posture of mind and body for the particular service or suffering we may be called to*. In the former sense, our LORD commands his disciples to *prepare or make ready the passover*^p: And in the latter, Peter says, LORD, *I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death*^q. And thus the apostle Paul uses the word to the brethren at *Cæsarea*: *I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD JESUS*^r. Which intimates, that he was intirely resigned to the pleasure of CHRIST, willing and resolved to suffer any thing for his sake. And, perhaps, both these ideas may be included, when he says to *Timothy*, not long before his suffering: *I am now ready to be offered*^s. The apostle may mean, not only that he was in a becoming frame, or disposition of mind for death, but that every thing relating to his execution, was prepared or adjusted by his enemies; as the time, place, manner, &c.^t I forbear mentioning other passages^u where this word occurs; it being plain from those already quoted, that it is generally designed to suggest *a fitness or suitableness of things for the present purpose*; or *such a disposition, or preparation of mind and body, as befits the spe-*

^p Luke xxii. 8, 9. with ver. 12. ^q Luke xxii. 33. ^r Acts xxi. 13.
^s 2 Tim. iv. 6. ^t See the like use of the word, Luke xvii. 8.
^u Luke xiv. 17. Mark xiv. 15. Acts xxiii. 15, 21.

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cial occasion before us. Agreeable hereto, in the verse preceding our text, we have the thing intended, tho' the word it self be not used, when our LORD says: That if the good man of the house knew at what watch or hour the thief would come, he would certainly *watch, b. e.* he would be upon his guard, endeavour to fortify his mind, and put himself in a proper posture of defence.

Now then, let us procede upon this representation, to consider the particular object in the text, the solemn concern of death. And here the inquiry will be, What is it to be *ready* for death? When may we be said to be *prepared* for it? Or, Wherein does our *readiness* for death lie?

I shall give in my answer to this, both negatively and positively.

I. As to the negative part :

1.) *Readiness* for death does not consist in a plentiful measure of human or worldly knowledge, in a vast fund of natural sense, or a large stock of acquired abilities. Who were better furnished upon these accounts than the antient heathen philosophers? Who have been more celebrated for their learning and wisdom than *Socrates, Plato, Seneca*, and the rest? What considerable persons for natural and acquired knowledge were the *princes of this world*, whom the apostle speaks of ^w; meaning *Herod, Pontius Pilate, Annas, Caias*.

^w 1. Cor. ii 6.

phas, and the doctors of the Sanhedrim. Yet what does the word declare concerning all of them? Why, that *the world by wisdom knew not God*^x, *b. e.* knew him not in a Mediator. As to the existence of a supreme being, that they were satisfied in from the works of creation and providence. They could not but own *his eternal power and Godhead, from the things which were made*^y, and from his giving them *rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons*^z. But then *they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations; and changed the truth of God into a lie*^a. And where there is nothing but nature, be its improvements never so high, it's impossible that God should be known and served aright. Witness what the apostle says: *The natural, or rational*^b, *man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*^c. In short, the true character of the creature in the fall, whatsoever are his natural qualifications or attainments, is this: *There*

^x 1 Cor. i. 21. ^y Rom. i. 26. ^z Acts xiv. 17. ^a Rom. i. 21, 25.

^b *Ψυχικὸς ἀνθρώπος*. The description is taken from the soul, the nobler part of the man; and therefore is not to be understood barely of the viler sort of mankind, or such who abandon themselves to the gratification of their sensual appetites (these are called *σαρκικὸς*, *b. e.* fleshly, or carnal, in an absolute sense) but of those especially here, who value themselves upon the score of natural reason, and purely resign to its dictates in matters of religion. The same word is rendered *sensual*, St. Jude ver. 19. and therefore the explication there given will suit both places, which is, that *they have not the spirit*.

^c 1 Cor. ii. 14.

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is none that [spiritually] understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one^d. And if this be the case, persons, who have nothing to recommend them but the bounties of nature, and the advantage of education, will be so far from being ready to meet death with comfort; that there is nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour them as adversaries^e. For God has avowed: He that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour^f.

2.) It is not barely a good natural disposition, nor any of those gifts which God bestows by a common dispensation, nor yet any of those emotions or workings of mind, which may be occasioned by common providences, that will bespeak a person ready for death.

We may be persons of an admirable natural temper, be of a sweet, obliging, affable disposition, have a great share of humanity and tenderness, may be meek, candid, patient, and the like; and yet be no more ready for death, than those whose natural temper is quite the reverse. Though these things are exceeding amiable in life, and make a fair shew in the flesh; yet, as our LORD says: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh^g*. And if there is nothing but flesh, we are assured, be its compo-

^d Rom. iii. 11, 12.

^e Heb. x. 27.

^f Isa. xxvii. 11.

^g John iii. 6.

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fiction never so elegant, its temper never so engaging, *that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*^h.

Nor is it any gifts bestowed by a common dispensation, which will denominate a man to be ready for death. Such, for instance, as the gift of utterance, or a volubility of speech; the gift of tongues, being able to speak several languages; the gift of prayer; a knowledge of apprehending difficulties in religion or scripture, and of being able to resolve them; together with a wonderful enlargement, and dexterity in the exercise of these gifts. *Judas*, we may reasonably suppose, had all, or most of these, and others too that might be extraordinary; and yet he was so far from being ready for death, that our LORD declares concerning him: *That it had been good for that man, if he had never been born*ⁱ.

Nor, once more, can this be concluded from any of those workings or inclinations of mind, which may be purely the effect of common providences. What instances have we of this kind on record in many who were notoriously vile? How was it with *Herod*, when he heard *John* gladly^k? And with *Felix*, when he trembled as *Paul* reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come^l? And with *Agrippa*, when he said to him: *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*^m? There may be some wishes after heaven, as in *Balaam*ⁿ.

^h 1 Cor. xv. 50. ⁱ Matth. xxvi. 24. ^k Mark vi. 20. ^l Acts xxiv. 25. ^m Ibid. xxvi. 28. ⁿ Numb. xxiii. 10.

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Some purposes to amend, as in *Saul*^o. Some terrors of conscience for sin, as in *Cain*^p. Some acknowledgments of sin, and external humiliation for it, as in *Judas*^q, and *Abab*^r. Some kind of pleasure in ordinances^t. And some sort of faith, *b. e.* a notional or historical, as in *Simon Magus*^t: There may be all this, and yet no *readiness*, no true *preparation* for death.

These things may be produced by personal afflictions, by national judgments, by some extraordinary occurrence, or, which is most frequent, by sitting under a powerful, awakening ministry; and the persons who feel these emotions be notwithstanding in a state of nature.

3.) We cannot be said to be *ready* for death *merely* because we are negatively righteous, or, in other words, because we avoid the grossest enormities. This was the *Pharisee's* preparation for death, and plea for acceptance with God. God, says he, *I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, nor even as this publican*^u. And this is the *readiness* which others have presumed upon since: Because they are not so unrighteous, nor such idolaters, nor such apostates, nor such swearers, as others; because they are no drunkards, nor adulterers, nor murderers, nor oppressors, nor covetous, nor proud, and the

^o 1 Sam. xv. 24, 25.

^p Gen. iv. 13.

^q Matth. xxvii. 3.

^r 1 Kings xxi. 27.

^t Matth. xiii. 20.

^t Acts viii. 13.

^u Luke

xviii. 11.

rest. But as they have no other plea than the *Pharisee* had, they will fare just as he did, that is to say, will not be hereby *justified* ^w.

There may be a *restraint* where there is no *readiness*. A man may leave his former gross sins, and yet be wholly *unprepared* for death and eternity. We have instances where persons have been brought thus far, and have appeared very lovely to the outward eye; and yet afterwards have discovered, that they were still under the power and dominion of sin. Witness those the apostle speaks of, who, to use his own words, *had escaped the pollution of the world*, h. e. had left their idolatrous and wicked practices, and yet were *again entangled therein*: It having happened unto them according to the true proverb: *The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and, the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire* ^x. And the same is intimated by our LORD in the parable, where he speaks of *the unclean spirit's being gone out of a man*; and of his *house being swept and garnished* for a time; the former corrupt conversation is broken off, and the man outwardly reformed: But in a little while *the unclean spirit returns, and takes seven other spirits with him, more wicked than himself*; and so *the last state of that man is worse than the first* ^y. *Abimelech* was restrained, yet a *Heathen* ^z. Fear, or shame, or the light of nature, or moral precepts, or other inferior

^w Luke xviii. 14. ^x 2 Pet. ii. 20, 22. ^y Matth. xii. 43—45.
^z Gen. xx. 6.

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causes, and by-ends, may do this, and yet the heart of the person be as destitute and empty of grace as ever.

It is true, where this *readiness* actually is, and the person feels the influence of it, *the love of CHRIST will constrain him*^a. He cannot run with others to the same excess of riot^b; but will deny himself in all ungodliness and worldly lusts^c. Though we cannot positively conclude, that persons are *ready* because they have broken off their former vicious courses; yet we may conclude, that those who are so, in the exercise of grace, certainly will.

4.) *Readiness* for death does not consist in the bare practice of moral virtues, or a strict care to observe the duties of the second table. To be *ready* for death, is not barely to be just, sober, temperate and liberal; to love our neighbour, do no man any wrong, and give every one his own. No, if *readiness* for death consisted in these things, many of the *Heathens*, who never heard of CHRIST, nor the necessity of being *born again*, might make as good, if not a better pretence to it, than some who call themselves Christians. Of this sort were the *Pharisees*; their reputation with the people, and their confidence towards God, had the same common bottom, namely, their outward conformity to the letter of the law. But who would trust this as a sufficient *preparation* for death, that has ever heard those

^a 2 Cor. v. 14.

^b 1 Pet. iv. 4.

^c Tit. ii. 12.

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words of CHRIST: *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*^d. The young man in the gospel could plead not only his *negative*, but his *positive* righteousness; *All these things, says he, have I kept from my youth up*^e. And yet we find he was not perfect; not *prepared* for his great change. This is easily observed from our LORD's words: *One thing thou lackest*^f. What was this? That faith which engages to obedience. And if that be wanting, we may conclude the person an intire stranger to the work of the Spirit.

Was there no more necessary to a *readiness* for death than this outward conformity to the law, the apostle Paul might have made himself very easy with his *Pharisaical* righteousness; he would have had no occasion to have thrown it aside,^g and to have told us, as he does, 'That tho' he once counted it *gain* to him, sufficient to have carried him to heaven; yet that now (since his conversion) he looked upon it as *loss*^h. But the apostle, when he wrote that epistle, was so well acquainted with the imperfection and sinfulness of his own performances; that notwithstanding *he knew nothing by himself*ⁱ; *b. e.* was conscious of no deficiency in point of duty, but *touching the law, was blameless*^j; yet he would not ven-

^d Matth. v. 20.

^e Ibid. xix. 20.

^f Mark x. 21.

^g Phil.

iii. 7, 8.

^h I Cor. iv. 4.

ⁱ Phil. iii. 6.

ture the welfare of his soul upon that, which he saw, if trusted to, would issue in his eternal ruin.

And herein no more is asserted, than what the whole tenor of the gospel confirms; for that expressly asserts, *That by the deeds of the law* (whether internal or external) *no flesh shall be justified in his sight*^k.

Nor does this in the least infringe upon the practice of moral duties, or countenance any in the neglect of good works. For this is most certain on the other hand, that tho' there may be the observance of these things, where there is no *readiness* (which therefore proves that it does not consist in this practice) yet there cannot be a true *readiness* in any, at least, no evidence of it, where the performance of moral duties is not religiously observed.

5.) We cannot be said to be *ready* for death, *barely* because we have submitted to the ordinances of the gospel, and made an outward profession of religion. A man may strictly adhere to some outward rites and circumstances in religion, prescribed by God, or received by tradition from his superiors or forefathers; may hear, and pray, and read; be baptized, submit to this, or the other form of ecclesiastical government; partake at the table of the LORD, and die in the communion of the church; and yet be as little *prepared* for death, as others who live in the total neglect of these things. This was great part of the *Pharisees*'

^k Rom. iii. 20. See also Gal. ii. 16.

righteousness. They were very punctual in their meats and drinks, their sacrifices and legal purifications. But what says the apostle: *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*¹. And our LORD himself before this, told the *Pharisees* to their faces: *That the kingdom of God cometh not with observation*^m; *b. e.* does not consist in external ceremony and shew.

Yet this is all the *preparation* some look after. And therefore our LORD tells us, That *many* will make it the matter of their plea another day, when they come to appear upon death, at his tribunal: *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence; and thou hast taught in our streets.* But what is his reply? *I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye that work iniquity*ⁿ. An indisputable proof that they were not *ready* for death.

It must, indeed, be confessed, that those who are truly *ready* will make conscience of observing all the institutions and ordinances of CHRIST. They will think it their duty to attend all the appointments of his house, as a public testimony of their faith in him, and subjection to him; but, forasmuch as many take up a *form of godliness*, who are notwithstanding strangers to the *power* ° of it, I think, it must likewise be own'd, that the *bare ob-*

¹ Rom. xiv. 17.

^m Luke xvii. 20.

ⁿ Ibid. xiii. 26, 27.

² 2 Tim. iii. 5.

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servation of these things is not sufficient to demonstrate any person *ready* for death.

6.) A reliance on the absolute mercy of GOD is *no readiness* for death. This is the rather to be taken notice of, because it is the prevailing practice of the day. What multitudes are there, who, notwithstanding they cannot but be conscious of many irregularities, both in heart and life, of many imperfections and short-comings, in the whole of their behaviour; yet satisfy themselves upon this principle, and sing a sweet *requiem* to their souls from a fancied share in the mercy of God. *We are, say they, in the hands of a merciful God, a being who can mean his creatures no harm*: That is, if I understand those words, they have to do with an easy, indolent being, who does not care which way things go; whether he is obeyed or not; whether his law is broken or fulfilled; but that will dispense with the honour of his government, and forgive them, let them act never so much at large. This way of thinking is much in the interest of *Satan*, and is used by him with wonderful success. But I pity the unhappy men whose eyes are so *blinded by the god of this world*^p. Pray, who ever told them, that the practice of GOD is at variance with his word; that he says one thing, and will do another? What is the language of Scripture? *There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked*^q. Which of the creatures, naturally considered,

^p 2 Cor. iv. 4. ^q Isa. lvii. 21.

but

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but must acknowledge the character, and may tremble at the curse that belongs to it? Who told them, that GOD would exalt his mercy to the destruction of his justice? No, he has found out a way, in which he is *merciful* and *righteous* ^r too at the same time, a *just* GOD, and yet a *Saviour* ^s; and therefore he will pardon none but in that way. It is surprizing to me, how *these* persons can allow themselves to think, that the Divine Majesty will be more favourable to them, than he was to his own Son. Would he not pass by sin in him, tho' *he did no evil* himself ^t, but was only the surety of others; how can they suppose he will pardon it in them, when the principals, the guilty, offending creatures? I dare speak no otherwise than the oracles of truth do, and they positively declare, That GOD *will by no means clear the guilty* ^u (and such we all are in our own persons) without a satisfaction. It will be in vain then to rely upon the absolute, uncovenanted mercy of GOD for salvation, or to think such a reliance a proper *readiness* for death; because GOD exercises no saving mercy out of CHRIST.

7.) Persons may be brought off from being violent opposers of CHRIST and his truths, and may become zealous advocates for him, and even preachers of those truths; and yet *not be ready* for death. Indeed, it may be said of these, That they are *converted* with respect

^r Psal. lxxxv. 10. ^s Isa. xlv. 21. ^t 1 Pet. ii. 22. ^u Exod. xxxiv. 7.

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to doctrines, or particular sentiments ; but real Christianity, upon which the *readiness* in our text is founded, is something else. Persons may have a sound doctrinal faith, and yet no saving knowledge in their hearts. This is evident from the parable of *the sower* : Where we are told, That those, who *received the seed into stony places*, are such as *heard and received the word, b. e.* the doctrines or truths of the gospel, *with joy* : That it immediately *sprung up* into an open and zealous profession before men ; but, that having *no root in themselves*, that is to say, being wholly destitute of a principle of grace, and having only the notions of things in their heads, they were presently *offended and fell away* ^w ; either by deserting religion, as many of the *Jews* did, after having embraced or professed Christianity ; or else, by turning the doctrines of grace into wantonness ; which was the case with the Christians, called *Gnostics*. While others fall away by apostatizing into grievous and *damnable heresies*, so *making shipwreck* of their doctrinal faith, and a *good conscience* ^x. Tho' should such continue in the profession of these truths, without ever backsliding ; yet even then, as they have no other interest in them, than what is purely nominal, they will find that this will by no means *prepare* them for death. For it is in true Christianity as the apostle declares it was with the spiritual *Jew* : *He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision, which*

^w Matth. xiii. 20, 21.

^x 1 Tim. i. 19.

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is outward in the flesh : But he is a Jew, who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart ; in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men but of God ^y.

And with respect to those of this character, who, besides an outward profession of these doctrines, have courage enough to preach them to others ; why, tho' it should be with some degree of success, yet our Lord has set this matter in so clear a light, that we can be at no loss how to determine about it ; his words are these : *Many will say to me in that day, LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ?* When he will profess unto them, *I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity ^a.* So that, in this respect, ministers and members, where there is nothing but profession and head-knowledge, stand upon the same foot ^a.

8.) *Lastly*, This *readiness* for death does not consist in our being born of godly parents, or being brought up in a religious way.

As to our *parents*, however good they may be, it is certain they cannot convey any of it to us in a way of ordinary propagation ; for *that which is born of the flesh is flesh*. As their nature was depraved and corrupted in *Adam*, so we derive nothing from them naturally but sin and corruption. And therefore among other negatives, which are put upon *the children of*

^y Rom. ii. 28, 29.

^a Matth. vii. 22, 23.

^a See the 5th

particular.

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GOD,

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GOD, they are said, *not to be born of blood*^b. Which is as much as to say, That this privilege does not come by natural generation; does not descend by way of inheritance, from father to son, as estates do. And that it cannot be in this way, is easily collected from what *Job* says: *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one*^c among the creatures. And again, as *Eliphaz* observes: *What is man that he should be clean; and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous*^d? No, we are so far from bringing this with us into the world, and receiving it by descent, *That we were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mothers conceive us*^e. And if this be the case, I am sure, this readiness cannot come in this way, or consist in our having godly parents.

Nor does it lie in our having a religious education. I readily acknowledge, that there are many singular advantages arising from a pious, godly institution; from a due care in principling the young and tender mind, and endeavouring to instil proper notions into it betimes. And likewise, that God has often been pleased to set in with, to over-rule and bless these methods to conversion. But separate from this, What is this goodness in it self? How does it prove? Too too often, *like the morning cloud and the early dew, it quickly goeth away*^f.

This is not said with a design to discourage parents and masters of families in attempts of

^b John i. 13.
li. 5.

^c Chap. xiv. 4.
^f Hof. vi. 4.

^d Ibid. xv. 14.

^e Psal.

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this kind ; they being certainly a great and necessary duty, and what can never be too strongly recommended to those persons, nor too closely pursued by them. *Solomon's direction is this : Train up a child in the way he should go^e.* And *St. Paul speaks to Christian parents after this manner : Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath ; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD^h.* Agreeable hereto, the same apostle mentions it to the commendation of *Timothy and his parents ; That from a child he had known the scripturesⁱ.*

But this notwithstanding, I still say, That should we take this towardsly disposition, and forwardness in the knowledge and duties of Christianity, for a true *preparation or readiness*, in the gospel use of the word, and endeavour to insinuate as much into the minds of our children ; it would be an effectual way to deceive both them and our selves. Whatever good beginnings there may be, while they are only the produce of nature, we may venture to say of those, where they appear, as our LORD did of *the young man : One thing is still lacking.* Such indeed, like the *Scribe, are not far from the Kingdom of GOD^k :* But they may go off, as 'tis probable he did, and never come there. But,

^e Prov. xxii. 6.
xii. 34.

^h Eph. vi. 4.

ⁱ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

^k Mark

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2. We go on with the positive branch of our answer.

Now *readiness* for death, in this sense, is either when there is a principle of grace implanted in the soul, or when that principle is drawn forth into exercise. The former may be called *an habitual* or *inherent readiness*, and the latter *an actual* or *practical readiness*.

1.) There is *an habitual readiness* for death. This, I apprehend, consists in a person's being *regenerated* or *born again*¹. When a man is savingly wrought upon by the Spirit of God, and made *partaker of a divine nature*^m, then

¹ I know some in accounting for *habitual readiness*, have supposed, that it consisted not only in a *work of grace upon the heart*, but in what they call a *relative change of state*.

Here, I confess my self, in the first place, dissatisfied with the very terms themselves; having no notion, with regard to the elect (of whom we must suppose this to be said) that there is any *relative change* in their state at all. Because, consider them with reference to the first *Adam*, and they are always under the condemning sentence and curse of the law, always exposed to misery and wrath: And again, consider them with reference to *CHRIST*, the second *Adam*, in their relation to him, and interest in his undertakings, and they are always accepted with God, acquitted by his law, and justified in his sight. Indeed, this is a secret to them, till they come to pass under a work of grace, and so are enabled to prove their election by their calling. But then this only proves, that the difference which faith makes in this case, is barely *apprehensive*.

And in the next, I declare, I cannot see how this account of *readiness* can ever be accommodated to this text. It is impossible that persons, in respect of their state, I mean absolutely considered, and separate from their apprehensions of it, should ever be more *ready* at one time, than at another. Because, as they belong to *CHRIST*, and are interested in his satisfaction and righteousness, they are, upon these accounts, as *safe*, and consequently as *ready*, before conversion, as ever they are after it.

^m 2 Pet. i. 4.

he may be said to be *habitually ready*; because as the *new creature* is formed, or a principle of grace wrought in the soul, so in that work, the habit of every grace is implanted. When one grace is wrought or planted in the soul, all are wrought in the principle or habit; tho' all be not in exercise, or are not brought to perfection. Hence it is, that when a person is regenerated or *born from above*ⁿ (as some render it) he is said to be *a new creature*. Therefore if any man be in CHRIST, *b. e.* if he be broken off from the olive, which is wild by nature, and be grafted into CHRIST, the true olive, be vitally united to him by the Spirit of GOD, and made to partake of his sap and fatness; he is *a new creature*^o. There is a whole *new man*; there are all the parts of *the new creation* in the principle or habit; which is sufficient to give it the denomination of a *man*, tho' they are not brought to their full stature or growth. As in an infant, there are all the parts of a man, tho' not the proportion. Hence there is no notice taken of what the creature was before, in his natural estate; but he is afterwards described from the new, the nobler principle. *The heart of stone is taken away*; it enters no more into the believer's character, and *a heart of flesh is given*^p. In conformity to this, the apostle, speaking of the working of corruption, has these words: *It is no longer I, b. e. I, the believer, the gracious person, the new man; but sin that dwells in me*^q.

ⁿ John iii. 3. ^o 2 Cor. v. 17. ^p Ezek. xxxvi. 26. ^q Rom. vii. 17.

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Now, if we would inform our selves more particularly about *the new creature*, in which this *habitual readiness* consists, or are inclined to inquire how it is to be known; the account will not be very difficult. The *new creature* is easily discovered by the fruits and effects which attend it; which are, as it were, the ingredients or constituent parts of this *readiness*.

As it consists then in a principle of spiritual life wrought in the soul by the HOLY GHOST, so it is to be known by such faculties, sensations and actions, as are peculiar to *a new creation*. For instance, where this *new creature* is, it discovers it self in *the understanding*, or by such a principle of spiritual knowledge, as gives the person a different view of divine things; and enables him to distinguish spiritual things in a spiritual manner; contrary to the account we have of persons in a state of nature. Again, it is discoverable *in the judgment*, as it leads the soul to determine concerning spiritual matters, in a way quite different from what natural men do: For such *call evil good, and good evil; they put darkness for light, and light for darkness*. But the person *habitually ready* is enabled, in some measure to determine in spiritual things, according to truth; and consequently approves and condemns differently from what he once did. Add to this, that the *new creature*, the foundation of all *habitual readiness*, is likewise to be observed in

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the will, as the person, from an opposite bias, is influenced to choose those things, which he once rejected; and to reject those, which he made choice of before. And lastly, in *the affections*, by turning the love and hatred of the person into different channels, and fixing them on different objects.

Again, this *habitual readiness*, or *new creature* (for they are only different words for the same thing) discovers it self in a quick sense or resentment of sin, in an abhorrence of it; deep abasement of soul, and godly sorrow for it, and in hating and forsaking it.

It appears in those convictions which are fastened upon the mind and conscience of a person, respecting the sinfulness and misery of his natural estate, and his own impotency and weakness, as well to remove the curse of the law, and satisfy for past sins, as to yield that obedience which the law requires, in order to his being justified by it. Upon which follows a sight or apprehension of the absolute need which the creature stands in of a perfect righteousness; that which is every way answerable to the demands of law and justice; together with a full conviction that this is no where to be found but with CHRIST, who has perfectly obeyed the preceptive part of the law, and suffered the penal, the curse of it, to the utmost; and who is thereby *become the fulfilling end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes* ^t.

^t Rom. x. 4.

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I subjoin farther, That this *habitual holiness*, or *new creature*, is observable in the influence it has upon the members of the body, as it engages those with whom it is found, to act in a different way from what they once did: Which is especially to be seen in those who were before openly profane. And as to others, whose education has been more religious, and their behaviour more strict, it however causes them to act from other principles, and to other ends, than what they were conscious of before.

How are the members of the body employed by persons who are not *habitually ready*? Wholly in the vassallage of sin, and the drudgery of *Satan*. See the apostle's account of this in the *Romans*: *Their throat*, speaking of carnal, unregenerate men, is *an open sepulchre*, sends forth nothing but stench; *with their tongues they have used deceit*; *the poison of asps is under their lips*: *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness*. *Their feet are swift to shed blood*^u. Hence sin is said to have *dominion over them*^w; and they are called *the servants of sin*^x, and said to *serve divers lusts and pleasures*^y.

But how is it after the *new creature* is wrought, after they are made *habitually ready*? Quite the reverse. They are *inabled to put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceit-*

^u Rom. iii. 13—15. ^w Ibid. vi. 14. ^x Ibid. ver. 16.
^y Tit. iii. 3. See the character of some at Corinth, 1 Epist. vi. 9, 10. And what St. Peter says, 1 Epist. iv. 3, 4.

ful lusts^a; and to put on the new man, which after GOD is created in righteousness and true holiness. Now they make no provision for the flesh^a to fulfil the lusts thereof^b; but, under the influence of grace, yield their members as instruments of righteousness unto GOD^c. The head is turned for better purposes, and the thoughts laid out in better designs than heretofore. Where this world, and the things of sense, where sin and Satan once governed; there GOD and CHRIST, and spiritual things, have now the ascendant. The tongue, which was before employed in vain, frothy discourse, in foolish talking and jesting^d, to the dishonour of GOD, the reproach of the gospel, and offence of the saints, is now a notable instrument in CHRIST's service. Like the pen of a ready writer^e, it recounts the excellencies of JESUS, becomes loud in his praise, and runs over the great things GOD has done for the soul^f. The hand is always ready to assist CHRIST in supporting his gospel, and ministering to his poor followers. And the feet swift in his business, ready to follow wherever he calls them, and run to the support of his interest. In short, where the heart is formed by grace for the LORD, and filled with gratitude and love to him, it commands every faculty of the soul, and every member of the body. The whole man is brought into subjection to CHRIST; is willing to lay himself and substance at his

^a Eph. iv. 22. ^a Ibid. ver. 24. ^b Rom. xiii. ult. ^c Ibid. vi. 13. ^d Eph. v. 4. ^e Psal. xlv. 1. ^f Ibid. lxxvi. 16. feet,

feet, and to *spend and be spent* for his sake. And thus, as the apostle says, *Old things are past away; behold all things are become new*^g.

Now where this is the case with any, such persons are made *habitually* or *internally* ready for death; because they are *born again*, and so shall see GOD. *The heart of stone is taken away, and they have a heart of flesh given them*; which is an evidence that the Spirit of GOD has been at work upon their souls, to effect this new covenant blessing; and is consequently a proof that they are intitled to all the privileges and blessings of the covenant of grace; among which death it self is one: That is their's^h. It is an evidence of their being made *internally* meet for the inheritance of the saints in lightⁱ, as they have been delivered from the power of darkness, and have been translated into the kingdom of GOD's dear Son^k here below: And this is a sure pledge that, at last, they shall be taken up into his kingdom of glory, and live with him for ever and ever.

Having endeavoured, in what has been said, to give you a just notion of *habitual* readiness, I would here beg leave to observe, That this branch of *preparation* is absolutely necessary to the latter, and the very foundation of it. It will be to no purpose to think about *practical* readiness, till we are *habitually* prepared. Not but

^g 2 Cor. v. 17.
ver. 13.

^h 1 Gor. iii. 21.

ⁱ Coloss. i. 12.

^k Ibid.

the creature, in his natural estate, is safe enough as to this, having it neither in his power, nor inclination to seek after it aright. For which reasons such persons ought never to be put upon it. As the thing is impossible, with respect to themselves, so it is highly unreasonable to press them to it. We are to seek things in GOD's order, in that method which he has prescribed. And therefore sinners are to wait upon GOD in the use of all appointed means; especially those of prayer, reading, and hearing the word, to be made *ready* by GOD himself (whose work it alone is) in the former way; and then being made *habitually ready*, as there is a proper foundation for that which is *practical*, so they ought not only to follow after it themselves, but are proper subjects to be exhorted to it by others.

Which leads me into one brief observation more, and concludes what I have to offer under this part of the subject; namely, That as our LORD recommends the duty in our text to his disciples only, it is a sufficient direction into his sense of it; and plainly intimates, that we are not to understand the *readiness* here of that which is *habitual* (there being the highest reason to suppose they were all *ready* in that way, Judas excepted) but that he exhorts them to cultivate a *practical readiness*. I procede therefore,

2.) To consider that branch of *preparation* which we call *actual* or *practical*.

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Now, I apprehend, the amount of this may be given in the three following particulars.

(1.) A person is then *actually ready* for death when he possesses a noble liberty of spirit, with respect to his departure; when he finds a holy disposal of mind to meet death; is wholly resigned to the pleasure of GOD in this article, and is intirely delivered from the *slavish fear* of death, come at what time, or in what manner it will. There is a *natural* and a *slavish fear* of death; the former belongs to us as creatures, and is not inconsistent with *actual readiness*; but the latter is sinful, and therefore contrary to it. And yet it is often thus with many of GOD's dear children, who, as the apostle says: *Through this slavish fear of death are all their life time subject to bondage*¹. But where a believer enjoys a *practical readiness* for his great change, he is delivered from this tormenting fear, and enabled to meet death with an holy composure of soul. This seems to have been the case with the *Psalmist*, when he says in the prospect of death, when he had the dark and gloomy passage before him: *I will fear no evil*^m. *David* was satisfied, that whenever death came, it would not be inflicted upon him in a *penal* way, as a proper punishment for sin, or as a curse denounced by the broken law. He knew that all this was removed by the death of CHRIST; and therefore he was helped to maintain a settled peace and tranquility of soul

¹ Heb. ii. 15.

^m Psal. xxiii. 4.

in the immediate views of his dissolution. And when the believer's mind is set at liberty in this way, and he is wholly delivered from this *slavish fear*, he may be said to be *actually ready* for death.

(2.) This *readiness* farther consists in having our affections disengaged from the things of time and sense, in having our eyes and our hearts turned off from worldly objects. I think, I cannot better exemplify this branch of *practical readiness*, than in the conduct which the *Israelites* were to observe in their eating the first passover. The direction I refer to is this: *And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand: And ye shall eat it in haste; it is the LORD's passover*ⁿ. The general import of the instruction seems to be this; that they were to eat the passover as persons who had their backs turned upon *Egypt*, who sat loose to every thing there, and were eager to be gone towards the better country. And what does the place spiritually suggest, but the frame and temper of the believer's mind, when he is in a *practical readiness*; when grace is so far in exercise that he can look with a degree of contempt upon the things of this world, and is not only above *the fear of death*, but even *the desire of this life*? This verily is to be *crucified to the world*, and to have *the world crucified to us*, as the apostle says it was with him^o. And what a desirable temper is that! But, alas,

ⁿ Exod. xii. 11. ^o Gal. vi. 14.

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how seldom, comparatively, is this the case with GOD's people? What hankering is there after the *onions and garlic of Egypt*^p? What longing after one beloved object or another? They lie near to us indeed; and we are but too apt to hover over them. They strangely intangle our affections, and glue down our very souls to the dust. But it is not thus, where the person is *practically ready*. Such a one beholds all these things in a different light. He sees, by an eye of faith, the vast disproportion which there is between earthly and heavenly objects. And that tarnishes all the glory of this world, and turns off the believer's affections another way. This leads me

(3.) To the last branch of *practical readiness*, which consists in having our desires fixed upon heavenly objects, our souls drawn forth towards CHRIST, and the glories of the upper world. We are then *practically ready*, when our expectations are raised towards heaven, and our souls are panting for GOD. Thus it was with St. Paul, when *he desired to depart, and to be with CHRIST*^q. And thus it was with the worthies who professed themselves to be *strangers and pilgrims*^r here, and to be *seeking a better country*, that is, *an heavenly*^s. This word [*seeking*] intimates the intenseness of their thoughts towards that better country, that their desires after it were so strong as to bear them off from all other objects;

^p Numb. xi. 5.
ver. 16.

^q Phil. i. 23.

^r Heb. xi. 13.

^s Ibid.

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and therefore 'tis said, in another place, that they were not *mindful of that country from whence they came out* ^f. So that we have two parts of *habitual readiness* in this single instance; namely, their being wholly disengaged from this world, and carried out in strong desires after a better. Thus it was with good old *Simeon*. He was upon the wing of faith; all rapture to be gone: LORD, *now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word* ^t. GOD having fulfilled his promise in lengthening out his days till he had beheld his Saviour, he was willing to shut his eyes directly on every thing else. He thought there was nothing worth seeing in this world, after he had beheld his incarnate GOD, and therefore was eager to depart. And thus it is with every believer under the gales of the Spirit. When GOD is pleased to indulge them with practical readiness, then they earnestly expect and desire *his Son from heaven* ^v; for CHRIST to come by death and *take them to himself* ^w.

Our LORD represents this temper of mind by several figurative expressions; particularly by *watching and waiting for him*, by having *our loins girded about*, and *our lights burning* ^x. Upon this last account, the *wise virgins*, in the parable, are said to be *ready* when the *bridegroom* came ^y. Now these representations intimate not only the reality of grace in the heart,

^f Heb. xi. 15.

^t Luke ii. 29.

^v 1 Thess. i. 10.

^w John xiv. 3.

^x Luke xii. 35—37.

^y Matth. xxv.

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which is the same with having oil in our lamps, but the necessity of its being in exercise: And so prove, that to be *practically ready*, is to be under the immediate influence of the Spirit, or in the present actings of faith, hope, love, and the other graces.

And it is certain that many of the saints have experienced this comfortable frame in their last moments. How have some of them *groaned to put off* this earthly tabernacle, and to be *cloathed upon with their house, which is from heaven* *? Have we not heard one or another of them say, with Simeon, LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace? And call upon their Redeemer to hasten his appearance, in those words; Come, LORD JESUS, come quickly *? So little have they been afraid of death! So much have their backs been turned upon this world, and their faces set towards the heavenly Canaan!

But then, here it is to be remembered, that this disengagement from the world, these desires towards heaven and happiness, are not merely on account of those afflictions which the saints meet with in this life, but from their hatred to sin; that they may be delivered from the *body of sin*, which they carry about with them here; from all temptations to it, and the very possibility of sinning. Besides which, the saint's love to holiness, and the desire which he has to have grace perfected, and

* 2 Cor. v. 2.

* Rev. xxii. 20.

to enjoy CHRIST in a more open and uninterrupted way, are principal incentives. These tend not a little to wean him from the creature, and to make him long to be above.

If, after this, any should inquire concerning the spring of *practical readiness*, or ask What is necessary to work up the soul into it? I answer, A believing view of the pardon of sin, and the justification of our persons; a well grounded assurance, that GOD is reconciled to us, and well pleased with us; a good hope, thro' grace, that we are taken into the number of his children, and so made heirs of GOD, and joint heirs with CHRIST; a comfortable persuasion, that, tho' we are to part with every thing at death, dear to us in this world, yet that it shall not be able to separate us from our GOD; but that he will be with us in our passage from time to eternity, from earth to heaven; that he will give his angels charge concerning us, to receive the disembodied spirit; and conduct it safe thro' the regions of the air. What shall I say? This noble disposition of soul is occasioned by being led to see that there is no difference between being *absent from the body*, and being *present with the LORD*; and that as a glorious consequence of this, we shall not only be delivered from every thing that is afflicting here, but be made perfectly holy and completely happy in the blessed society of the other world.

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Having thus gone thro' what we designed on the first head of discourse, our next business is,

Secondly, To consider the necessity of this duty, or the reasons on which it may be enforced.

And these, according to the nature of the readiness here spoken of, will unavoidably fall under a twofold distribution; that is to say, firstly, such as respect *habitual readiness*; and, secondly, such as regard *practical*.

I. Now as to the reasons which satisfy me, that *habitual readiness* is absolutely necessary, in order to our meeting death with comfort, such as these may be collected from the chapter where our text is.

1.) The necessity of this duty may be farther evinced, from *the certainty* of the Son of man's coming; from the *manner* in which he will come; and the *uncertainty* of the particular time when that will be. Will CHRIST certainly come to us by death? Is it appointed for all men once to die? Will he come in such a sudden and surprizing manner? And yet is it altogether uncertain at what hour, in what particular season or stage of life, he will come? Shall it be as *a thief in the night*^c, and at a time *when we look not for him*^d? It undoubtedly behoves us, as expectants of our LORD's approach, to be, at least, *habitually ready*. The *certainty* of the thing it self, and the *uncertainty*, as to the

^c Matth. xxiv. 43.

^d Ibid. Ver. 50.

time,

time, bespeaks the duty to be absolutely necessary. But then,

2.) This may likewise be argued from the different issue of our LORD's coming; or from the different effects of it, respecting those who shall then be found *ready*, and those who shall not.

Now as to the former, those who *are ready*, the consequence of CHRIST's coming to them will be praise and reward: *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods.* This is in part fulfilled to his servants, when he comes to them by death, and their souls enter into the joy of their LORD; but will be accomplished in an higher sense another day, when they come to live and reign with him in the *new heavens and new earth*.

But how different from this? How dreadful will CHRIST's coming be to those who are *not ready*? Instead of being commended and rewarded by him, they will meet with nothing but reproof and correction, and that in the severest manner. For this is the account: *But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, &c. The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not ware*

^c Matth. xxiv. 45—47.

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of, and shall cut him asunder[†]; and appoint him his portion with hypocrites: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth[‡]. This likewise is partly inflicted by CHRIST upon the wicked, when he comes upon them by death, and turns their souls into hell; but the consummation of it will follow the general judgment, when he shall cast them, body and soul, into outer darkness.

Now if the case stand thus; if the coming of our LORD will be attended with such contrary effects upon the souls and bodies of men, as they are found *ready* or *unready*; certainly it proves the necessity of the duty in our text, beyond contradiction. Is there not a vast disproportion between praise and reproof, between rewards and punishments? And are the one connected with this *readiness*? Are the other consequent upon an *unpreparedness*? Who sees not how reasonable and necessary it is, as we desire to escape everlasting misery, and enjoy everlasting happiness, to be found *ready* when the LORD comes?

But then, besides those reasons for *habitual readiness*, which we meet in the context, I cannot, out of many others that might be produced, forbear subjoining these two.

[†] This kind of punishment was used of old both by the *Greeks* and *Romans*; as we learn from their poets. We have some instances of it in Scripture. *Samuel* inflicted this punishment on *Agag*, 1 Sam. xv. 33. And *David* on the *Ammonites*, 2 Sam. xii. 31. And it was threatened to the blasphemers of the true God by *Nebuchadnezzar*, Dan. iii. 29.

[‡] Matth. xxiv. 48, 50, 51.

1.) *Habitual readiness* for death is absolutely necessary from the divine appointment or ordination. Those whom God has set apart for salvation, he has determined to regenerate. St. Paul is very express in this doctrine, when he says, concerning the saints at *Thessalonica*: *But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, thro' sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*^h. It is evident from hence, that the way in which God has appointed to save sinners, is that wherein *habitual readiness* consists [sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.] From which it is easily concluded, that if a person cannot be saved without being acquainted with these things, neither can he, for the same reason, be *ready* to meet death with any advantage. There is a strict connexion, by the divine appointment, between grace and glory, between sin and wrath. And therefore it is, I apprehend, that we frequently meet with those declarations in Scripture: That *the unrighteous* (who, in another word, may be called *the unready*) *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*ⁱ; and that *without holiness none shall see the Lord*^k. And in another place, that *no unclean thing shall enter into the New Jerusalem*^l. With others of the like import^m; which intimate the necessity of a work of grace, and

^h 2 Epist. ii. 13. See also Eph. i. 4.

^k Heb. xii. 14.

^l Rev. xxi. 27.

John iii. 3, 5. And viii. 24.

ⁱ 1 Cor. vi. 10.

^m Luke xiii. 3, 5.

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are to be resolved into the divine appointment. And if such a work is necessary in order to future and everlasting happiness, it certainly proves, that *habitual readiness*, which consists in it, is absolutely necessary to a gospel *preparation* for death.

2.) The necessity of *habitual readiness* may be proved from the nature of the thing it self, or its correspondence with a future state of perfection and blessedness. Were it possible for a wicked, unregenerate person to get into heaven, which it is not ; yet it would be no heaven to him, because there would be no suitability, no agreement of nature in him to that state. What would he do there ? He would be capable neither of the enjoyments, nor of the business of that world. Who with a nature wholly depraved, a bias of mind wholly contrary to every thing good, could enjoy himself in a state where there is nothing but perfection ? What society would God, or the saints, or the holy angels be to him ? What communion could he have with them ? What pleasure could he take in them ? Just so it would be in respect of the duties, the employments of that state. The whole business of the heavenly host is to love and delight in the supreme good, and the glorious objects they have there to converse with. Their souls are filled with admiring thoughts of free, distinguishing grace ; their tongues are engaged in celebrating the praises of Father, Son, and Spirit, in electing, redeeming, and calling them. But what interest
has

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has the wicked, unregenerate soul in these things? What part can he bear in these duties? None at all. And therefore our LORD says: *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*.^a He may mean, *first*, that he cannot even enjoy the privileges of a gospel church, (GOD's *kingdom* below) the principal of which is communion with GOD; nor perform the duties of his house here in a spiritual, evangelical manner. And *then*, in a higher sense, that he cannot enjoy *his kingdom above*, being incapable (as we have before observed) both of the pleasures and business of that world. What then is the consequence? That *habitual*, heart *readiness* is absolutely necessary, from the very nature of the thing, to our dying with comfort.

2. I am next to offer some reasons to demonstrate how necessary a duty it is to labour after *practical* or *actual readiness* for death. And,

1.) This may be argued from the authority of the person who enjoins this duty, and the example he makes use of to enforce it, in the context.

As to the Person who exhorts to *practical readiness*, it is no other than CHRIST, who has not only right or power to enjoin what he pleases on his people, but wisdom and faithfulness, to secure him from enjoining any thing unnecessary. Has CHRIST then said: *Be ye also ready*? His name and authority ought to

^a John iii. 3. weigh

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weigh with us. We are to believe it necessary; because he has commanded it.

Add to this, the conduct of the *good man of the house*. Our LORD makes this a precedent to his disciples. The present duty is connected with it, and enforced upon this argument: If a man who is only possessed of a few temporal good things, some outward conveniencies or necessities of life, would use the utmost care to preserve them from the violence of a thief; how much more ought those, who are possessed of an invaluable treasure, who have nothing less at stake than precious, immortal souls, to be always upon the watch, always *ready* for the approach of death? Besides the reason in the context, we may observe,

2.) That this will appear to be a very necessary part of the believer's duty, If we consider how much our surviving friends are interested in it. The comfort of our lives, in a great measure, is wrapt up in the pleasurable enjoyment of our friends, and therefore we cannot part with them without some struggles, some convulsions of nature. Yet if it is a circumstance in the death of our relations or acquaintance, which tends to alleviate our sorrow, that we have good reason to believe they were *habitually ready*, that there was really a work of grace begun in their souls, tho' the evidences of it might not be so strong as in some; how much more will it suppress our grief, and keep us in a good degree composed, when we stand by and see a great deal of the triumphs of faith in
their

their last moments? The question then here is, Whether we desire to consult the comfort of our friends? Whether we think any thing that may contribute to it a necessary duty? If we do, we shall readily determine in the present case. We shall be at no loss to conclude, That when they can enjoy us no longer in this world, their greatest pleasure will be to know we are happy in the other. And that in order thereto, it lies upon us, in the use of all proper means, to endeavour after a *practical readiness* for death; which, as it will give them the best evidence of our happiness, will certainly prove most to their satisfaction.

3.) The necessity of this duty is to be farther evinced from the particular concern we have in it our selves. What think you is it that makes death so formidable to us? Why do we startle, and shrink back, at the apprehensions of it? Why are we afraid it will strip us of every thing valuable here; present us as criminals at the bar of GOD, and lodge us eternally in the prison of hell? Why is all this? Alas! the reason is plain; because we are not *practically ready*; because grace is not in exercise. Death would soon lose every thing that is terrible in it to nature, was faith more on the wing; did we view it in a gospel light, as disarmed by CHRIST, and designed to the believer's advantage? Would we then think of death with pleasure? Would we run to its embraces? Would we rejoice in the views of our dissolution? Let us make it the matter of our
G prayers,

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prayers, and the subject of our endeavours to be *practically ready*. Once more,

4.) The glory of GOD depends so much upon our being *practically ready*, that was there no other reason, that alone is sufficient to prove it a believer's necessary duty. As GOD is glorified in nothing so much as in the exercise of his people's graces, so never so much in those as at the hour of death. To see or hear a believer then in the raptures of faith, when there is nothing but immediate death before him, what can we think of it? What shall we say to it? This must effectually stop the mouths of gainfayers, and force them to confess, that there is something *real* in religion; that a work of grace, as much as it is ridiculed by the men of the world, is not a mere name, but that *good part which shall never be taken away*ⁿ. And tho' perhaps these things are not so common, as we could wish for, yet, blessed be GOD, he has not left us without many instances of this kind. The persons have been known, who, when taking their leave of this world, bidding adieu to all the things of time and sense, have discovered that *hope which maketh not ashamed*^o, that *peace which passeth understanding*^p, and that *joy which is unspeakable and full of glory*^q. How say we then? Do we love GOD, and desire to advance his glory? Would we willingly bear a testimony to the truth, as it is in JESUS, and to the

ⁿ Luke x. ult.

^q I Pet. i. 8.

^o Rom. v. 5.

^p Philip. iv. 7.

powerful operations of the HOLY GHOST upon our souls? Let it be our concern to cultivate *practical readiness*. We cannot but see it our duty, GOD grant we may make it our constant endeavour. But then,

Lastly, I am to conclude with such reflexions, as may be proper to the subject, and the awful providence before us. And therefore,

1. What has been observed, naturally leads us to infer the miserable state of all persons by nature. Nothing, I think, can be more evident from the premises than this. For if the circumstances of the creature, as he comes into the world, are such, that he is not *ready* to die, if he is not in a condition to meet death with comfort; but considered in his relation to *Adam*, as he is, under the condemning sentence of the law, has all to expect from death which may render him uncomfortable here, and eternally miserable hereafter: What state so melancholy? What condition so miserable as the natural man's? How terrible is it to think of *death*, when it comes purely as *the wages of sin*^r, and when everlasting wretchedness is intailed upon it?

2. Since it appears of infinite consequence to be *ready* for death, what has been said, I apprehend, naturally suggests to us the necessity of self-examination. If things are, as have been represented, how much does it concern us

to reflect upon our state Godward; to look into our own souls, and examine whether we have any ground to conclude that we are *ready* for death?

If any should object the difficulty of this work: I am ready to give them all the assistance I can, and, as the most effectual method, would beg leave to mention a few questions, which it may not be amiss for every one of us to put to our selves. They shall be drawn from the explication we have already given you of the *readiness* in the text, and are these following: What do I know of a work of grace upon my soul? What ground have I to think I was ever regenerated? Can I say, that tho' I was once darkness, yet that now I am light in the LORD? That tho' I was once all obstinacy and rebellion, that now the enmity of my carnal mind is slain, and that my soul is brought into subjection to CHRIST? That tho' my affections were once wholly irregular, yet that now they are taken off from every false object, and, in the exercise of grace, placed on those things which are only worthy of them?

Do I find an aversion to sin, and an abhorrence of every evil way? Was I ever humbled and broken under a sense of it? Ever enabled to hate and forsake it?

Was I ever convinced of my lost state by nature? My sinfulness and guilt, my impotency and weakness? Was I ever led to see an end of all perfection in the creature, and made desirous of being found in a better righteousness than

than my own? Was I ever conducted to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and brought to see a suitableness and sufficiency in him to answer all my necessities?

Can I witness to a happy alteration in my outward conduct? Am I employed in a different way, or from different principles, to what I once was? Do I *delight in the law of God after the inner man*? And am I enabled to present my *body a living sacrifice acceptable to God*, thro' CHRIST JESUS? A positive answer to these questions will be a comfortable evidence of *habitual readiness*.

Again, How do I find it with my soul in the prospect of death? Am I delivered from *slavish fear*? Do I experience any degree of liberty in this particular? Are my affections disengaged from the things of time and sense? And do I find a breathing of soul after my *Father's house*, my *heavenly inheritance*? If this be the case, there is equal reason to conclude you are likewise *practically ready*.

3. If what has been said is just, it loudly bespeaks the monstrous stupidity and folly of mankind, naturally considered. How dreadful is it to think, that notwithstanding they are in such circumstances as lay them open to every thing terrible and destructive, both for time and eternity, yet that they should be so far benumbed and hardened by sin, as to *put the evil day far from them*, and live as tho' they were never to die. Surprizing, that creatures who

^f Rom. vii. 25.

^t Ibid. xii. 1.

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are upon the brink of another world, ready to fall headlong into the *burning lake*, can yet allow themselves to sport with death, and laugh at eternity! O, the wretched consequences of sin! What blindness of mind, what hardness of heart, what perverseness and rebellion of soul have followed upon it!

4. If the account given of *readiness* for death be scriptural and genuine, we have sufficient reason to explode the absurd doctrine of *Purgatory*. Does our LORD press it as a duty incumbent upon his people in this world? What they are to expect in the use of appointed means here? And is it evident that this *readiness* is *habitual* in the first implantation of grace, and *practical* in the lively exercise of grace? Let none of us expect an intermediate state, where we must stop to be *prepared* by the way. No, when the soul leaves the body, it returns to GOD, who gave it; and if it is not found *ready* for heaven, sprinkled with the blood of CHRIST, and purged from dead works by the SPIRIT, it will be found *ready* for hell, where it shall always be in the fire, but never be purified.

5. This account of *readiness* may furnish us with matter of support in parting with such of our friends, as we have reason to believe were possessed of it.

And here I cannot but mention it, as a very comfortable argument under the present providence, that there is so much ground for hope in the death of our departed Friend.

This

This I may venture to say, from personal conversation with him, that he appeared to have a favour of the best things upon his mind; that he knew the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and loved the truths of his gospel. While he continued sensible in his illness, it was observed that he conversed much with the LORD; that his soul was carried out to him both in prayer and praises. And tho' I do not find that he had any great variety of promises given in; yet, I think, he had one so full and extensive, so sweet and refreshing, as may very well answer for all. The words are these: *But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, o Jacob, and he that formed thee, o Israel, fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine* ^v. Every word, as we commonly say, is a sentence, and the whole is the gospel in epitome. This, indeed, increases our loss, yet cannot, at the same time, but alleviate our sorrow. May the consideration be blessed of God for this purpose, to mournful relations in particular.

As for his conduct in life, I am not so immediately concerned with that; neither is there much occasion for me to speak of it here. You especially, who are in the management of this *Lecture*, are sensible with what temper and prudence he behaved, beyond what is common at his years ^w. His oeconomy was exceedingly regu-

^v Isai. xliii. 1.

^w The late Mr. Matthew Madden died at Stoke Newington, January 8, 1734, being 24 years of age.

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lar. Nothing could tempt him to break in upon any part of good order.

His serviceableness in this *Lecture* will not readily be forgotten. You know his application this way, and his dexterity in it. How thoughtful was he to have it settled upon a good bottom at first? How indefatigable till he saw it happily accomplished? You had him wholly in the undertaking; he was all concern for the interest in your hands. And what think you constrained him in this manner? Zeal for the REDEEMER, and love to invaluable souls.

I am, indeed; heartily concerned for what you suffer in Mr. MADDEN'S death; and likewise for what is struck off from your supply by the several other removes: Yet I would encourage my self, as well as you, in believing, that as the work is the LORD'S, so he will take care to support it. All hearts are in his hand, and all provisions at his disposal; and tho' he diminishes one way, he knows how to make it up another; tho' he has so suddenly removed no less than four valuable members, he can, with ease, send in double the number.

See to it your selves, that you do not faint in your minds, nor grow weary of well doing. Set the example of your departed Friend before you, and only copy his affection and diligence; and, I imagine, I may for once say, without pretending to a spirit of prophecy, that GOD will prosper your labour of love, and make that which you have designed for his honour, a lasting monument of yours.

THE END.

